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The Minstrel

Redeemer College

Spring 1988



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P R E F A C E

True wit is nature to advantage dressed,
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed

Alexander Pope

The Minstrel is a bi-annual compilation of the literary output of Redeemer College students. Its purpose is fourfold: to provide campus writers with the means to display their talent; to expose Redeemer College literary talent to the Christian community and the community at large; to expose individuals to the study of literature in general; and to provide material on which to practice Christian literary criticism in particular.

The editors of *The Minstrel* would like to clarify what is involved in a Christian literary approach. To read literature as a Christian is not to concentrate on the message of the work. That is secondary. The primary consideration when reading literature is to appreciate the means employed by the author to convey his message.

Allow us to elaborate. Literature is a window. Through it we may observe situations and lifestyles which, though they may not always correspond directly to our own perspective, are nevertheless a valuable tool for understanding the world around us. It is important to remember that between the message and ourselves is the window, the means that the author has chosen to convey his message. What we are interested in is not WHAT the author has said, but HOW he has said it. Once we have understood the medium (the form and the artistic content), we are free to criticize the message.

The editors of *The Minstrel* would like to thank all its contributors, its typist Helena Dryfhout, its cover artist Tim Bleeker, editor of the *CROWN* John Noordhof (who made this first issue possible), and the English Department which provided impetus and advice. Each work herein is protected by copyright and may not be republished, reprinted or reproduced in any way without the written permission of the author.

Richard Horlings & Lloyd Rang
Redeemer College, 1988

I N M E M O R I U M

Holy Sonnet I

Wonder in me is bound by things unseen;
But Lord, if you revealed to me every
Myst'ry on earth, in skies and sea, they'd be
But dim: my mind holds only things unclean.
For when the sun's glow leaks beyond far hills,
A golden city spells from valley bowl;
I set my face to seek this light, but cold
Dark waves of night wash over me and fill
Each pore like phlegm from lipless mouths of sin.
Through tar-stuck eyes I wander and I fight
To see the paths lit with electric light;
I languish in thee night apart from Him.
Oh Father please transfuse me with your blood,
And wash these tarry eyes with spit and mud.

Steve Kouwenhoven (1960-1987)

-To Catherine-

The time is come for Pure and Dark to die
and pass the shuns of hearts of knives in flight
through day, through night; the time is come to fly
and touch delight in bright celestial stars tonight.

As white is black as souls that bleed at night,
from dawn till dusk we live to die our way
then laugh from dusk till dawn by lunar light,
as black is white as souls on wedding day.

I pray, "My God, how bless'd am I by Thee
to be the Dark and love the Pure so free,
and know a God in lover's arms so pure:
One life, one love, one bond, one fire we're sure."
As Pure and Dark are found as not in light,
by light and death will be as one tonight.

-A.A. Blackwell-

Silence

A yellow dandelion in the grass
is such a peaceful thing to see
on a lazy summer day: A small brass
button innocently lures the bee.

The buzzing bumblebee buzzes and sits,
buzzes and sits, buzzes and sits, until
he has sucked out all the juice; then he quits,
returns to the hive to empty his fill.

Life is like a dandelion, and I
feel like a bee: being lured by the sights
and taking it all in. But I fly by
my hive. I'm blinded by my hurried flight.

It hurts, because the nectar which I hold
could be the sweetest story never told.

Audrey Benjamins

Time Left

If the flowers
wilt today
and we see through our tears
death and decay
we must remember
without hearts
the thousands of seed
buried in the secret parts
because our Maker
reveals only fragments
and hides the Rest
for future time
when enough rain has fallen
to perfect the conditions
for germination
with soft sunshine
to beam on a fuller garden

Audrey Benjamins

New Life

Water
glistening on a silver web,
drip. drip. drip. dripping of a roof top,
bubbling over smooth moss covered rocks,
surging in a mighty river,
cascading, roaring over falls,
slashing as skies open in storm.

Water.

"In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
I baptize you."

A few drops fall gently
cleansing, refreshing,
giving New Life.
Take it and live in Christ,
as you were washed in Him,
and having professed your faith,
you are now part of the family of God.

Heather Wind

nix ad caelo cadit

see the snow shine as it falls
gently brushing night
fading into soothing drifts
tinging sleeping pines
whispering lullabies
to watching stars

hear the dying snow
wail as acid burns
cringe from ripped metal
torn glass
choke on blemished air
shout deathsongs
to horrified skies

still the snow falls through the night
softly gliding down
to scarmarked rest
layering all with gentle white
that croons
to mourning stars

Deanna van Dijk

Winter Sunset

At dusk
You are a drop of blood on the horizon.
Your light is dim, the world grows dark,
and you cast disproportionately long
shadows where your light once shone.
Your warmth has waned, the world grows cold,
and the last piece of ice loosened by your heat
slides off the roof in a rushing whisper.

At dusk
You fall behind the line of trees on hills.
You are missing and you are missed
in this water-coloured world of
black, white, and grey earth, and crimson sky.
You are missing and you are missed
and clouds like smears of molten lead
are dark stains on red velvet.

At last
as dusk melts into twilight,
the cold, red glow you leave behind
softens, and freezes into darkness.

Richard Horlings

to live

a shattered hand
clutches at the glass
cuts itself again

a weary eye
squeezes out a tear
bows to one new scar

a cracking throat
gasps a plea for water
spits it at the giver

a crying life
winks out one more light
screaming screaming

a dying man
lived a thousand hells
whispered love

Deanna van Dijk

Imprisoned

Blades of grass stand erect,
daring not to whisper.
Emerald leaves hang in suspense,
to terrified to breathe.
Layers of air piled deep,
like heavy, motionless corpses.
Tiny ants petrified, retreat,
to a sandy basement fortress.
The sparrow's lullabye is silenced,
unable to soothe the nightmare.
Velvet petaled flowers cringe,
under the sun's heated torture.
Big, blue flies mimic death,
refusing to pester disaster.
Splinters of lightning tiptoe a dance,
along the black horizon.
Echoes of thunder vibrate,
against the crystal blue dome.
A flashing memory (of you) squishes out a tear,
hesitant to streak my cheek.

Audrey Benjamins

Dear God, I Cried!

Am I allowed?
to grieve during sorrow
and to realize desolation in relation
to tomorrow?

What if,
what if a tear or two is shed
or wrung out from my heart,
and flung against the brick wall that separates
the ideal
from the real.
from me?

Am I allowed
to grope for the depths of darkness
and to grapple with despair,
which is often felt but remains unseen or
does that slam shut the face of eternity?

tears are shed deep in the night,
and dissolve when the sun
knifes the break of day,
because my fear of the world is so
wretchedly wound around my soul,
tighter than the dark which lurks within
my heart.

Am I allowed?
to fight the fear (which is feared
more than reality) which
is too deep within
to come without?

Dear God,
I cried!

Audrey Benjamins

-A Sort of Sunset-

The grave dance is a peculiar thing,
Horizontal, without much swing.
And so time hurries on. . .

A.A. Blackwell

Whirlwind
Sweeping tornado
Biting bits of paper
Cluttering garbage
Heaping piles
Surrounded, encased.
Which way is out?

Calm exterior
Hurricane inside
Confusion
Whipping winds
Can't stand up
Leaning, falling.
Which way is out?

Pounding surf
Bare rocks
Swirling sand
Down deep
Undertow
No air, no time.
Which way is out?

In the midst of the storm,
 I cannot lose you.
Down, in the depths of the sea,
 You are there.
Let me hide in you.
 My way out.

Heather Wind

- 6 1 6 9 6 4 6 3 -

She lies deep underground
Naked
Shaking
On a cold concrete floor
Crying
Dying
Pondering infinity
and the death of Rudolph Hess

-A.A. Blackwell-

Bentley Buys a Baronetti

He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. Luke 11

Bentley juggled the one remaining jar of pickles and almost caught it, but it rolled off his fingertips and shattered on the floor in the middle of the aisle. He glanced around quickly. Only a few straggling customers were left in the store. Deaf, half blind Mrs. Willsie was down by the jams holding the jars up near the end of her nose so that she could read the prices. Bentley thought to himself that this could have happened at a worse time, but then he heard the door of Mario's office slam shut. Mario marched across the floor; he would smile patronizingly at the customers and blow up when he rounded the corner. Bentley began picking out shards of glass from the five shattered jars at his feet. His pants were painted with preservative vinegar, and the stench immediately permeated the air. Mario turned down Bentley's aisle and stood over him; he cowered at his feet, waiting. Mario grabbed him by the arm and hauled him to his feet. He looked up Bentley's nose. Bentley hulked a full twelve inches over him.

"Were you born retarded or did someone teach you?" It was a line Mario liked to use on Bentley at least once a week. He stared up into Bentley's empty eyes and felt a small twinge of remorse.

"Clean it up quick. I gotta be home at nine or my wife falls asleep watching Dallas." He walked back out to the front of the store and said something to Carla, the cute check-out girl who lived next door to Bentley; they both laughed. Bentley scooped up the pickles with his hands and dropped them into the empty carton. Mrs. Willsie called out a friendly hello to Bentley as she pushed her cart through the pickles that lay in the middle of the aisle. She didn't even notice them until she stepped on a large one that squirted pickle juice and vinegar into Bentley's mouth as he opened it to return her greeting.

An hour later, Bentley walked back into the store after helping the last of the customers carry their groceries to their cars. It was raining, and Bentley's toupee, unknown to him, had shifted slightly out of place so that a line of baldness circled up the left side of his head and around the back. He walked to the back of the store, ducking his head so that the low-hanging "Special This Week" signs didn't knock his hairpiece off. He grabbed his leather jacket and was walking toward the back door when Mario called him from behind.

"Hey Bentley, wait up." He was carrying an apple in his right hand. He took a chomp out of it and said, "Hey buddy. Look, I'm sorry about ragging out about the pickles." He cast his eyes this way and that, looking at everything but Bentley. Bentley stood with his hands in his pockets and shuffled his feet, looking at the floor so far below. "Hell, nobody every buys gallon jars of pickles, anyway." He tried to think of something else to say, looking at Bentley's chest. "Just--hey, I'm sorry. You're not such a bad guy, Bent. Just sometimes you're so damn stupid.

I'm sorry about yelling at you." He couldn't think of anything else to do, so he held up his apple to Bentley. "Here have the rest of my apple. It's OK, go ahead and take it." Bentley took it, forgetting to say thank you. They turned away from each other.

"Have a good weekend, buddy. Take it easy on the women." He laughed. Bentley walked out the door, munching on the apple and wondering if "Dukes of Hazard" would be over when he got home.

The streets of Princeton were quiet and gloomy except for a bunch of kids standing outside of Koetsier's Variety. They glanced Bentley's way for a second. One of them said something and they laughed. The rain was coming down in earnest now, and Bentley began searching his pockets for his keys. He found them and opened the passenger door of his '74 Dodge Dart. He had to open this door because the lock on the driver's door had been broken for the last six months. He put the key in the ignition and turned it. the engine made an odd buzzing noise, slowly turned over and roared to life. Bentley always pressed the accelerator to the floor

because he liked the roar of the engine. But now there was another sound under his hood--a strange tapping noise, not unlike the sound of his mother's grinding teeth at night. He listened, letting his foot off the accelerator, then pressing down again. The tapping slowed down and sped up in time with the engine. He got out, walked to the front of the car and opened the hood. He couldn't see anything but the usual jumble of wires and hoses, coils and other metal things. He checked the battery terminals. Bentley knew what the battery was for. He knew how to check the oil, too, and he did this. It was low. So low in fact that nothing showed on the dipstick.

"But I just put some in a month ago," he said. "Heck, you sure burn it fast, you old bitch." He smiled to himself, liking the sound of that. He got into the car again, put it in reverse and drove onto the street. He was sure that it could wait until tomorrow.

As he drove down Elm Street, he noticed that the tapping was getting louder. The car missed, and a cannon shot of backfire from his tailpipe rocked the car. Mrs. Willsie was walking home, pushing her carry cart, and she turned to look at Bentley as he stopped at the light. The backfire was the first sound that she'd heard in ten years; she looked up at the sky, said a Hail Mary and crossed herself.

The light turned green, and Bentley pressed the accelerator to the floor. The car stalled. Bentley turned the key; again there was the strange buzzing noise, followed this time by a low "er-er-er" before the engine kicked in. the staccato tapping was louder and more rapid, now. His mother never ground her teeth that fast. He was shivering now, and his hands were numb on the steering wheel. Something must be terribly wrong, he thought. He just wanted to make it home. "Please, car, please let me make it home." In reply, the car stalled again.

"You whore," he said, then flushed at his own language. "I'm sorry. Just start, please." He turned the key, and this time there was a loud clunk, followed by the now familiar buzz which came just before the low "er-er-er" and the roar of the engine mixed with the trip-hammer tapping. His heart almost beat in time with the tapping as he turned onto Malone Crescent. Two more blocks until home. Mother would have cold liver on his plate, and she would complain about the way he looked. Then she'd tell him about her rotten day, and say "My life isn't easy you know. You think it's easy? Many's the day that I would just love to kick the bucket. Kick it right out the door." She would laugh and Bentley would chuckle along with her, but he never really knew why.

One more block. The engine was puttering and missing to its own beat, now. There was an entire heavy metal band playing under the hood of his car. He thought to himself that he'd like to put on some AC/DC when he got home. He had just bought a new pair of Sankyo headphones in Palmer the week before.

He pulled into the driveway of his mother's house, and with a click of finality the car stalled again. the red "hot" light lit up. Bentley didn't know if that meant much. He got out of the car, locking the doors. He would take it down to Harold's Shell the next day and get Harold to put some oil in it. As he walked to the front door, Bentley didn't notice that the pouring rain evaporated when it hit the hood of the car.

"Hello dear," Mother called from the living room as he walked into the house. "I've got some liver on the table. It shouldn't be too cold." Mother was about half as tall as Bentley and three times as wide; she spoke with a small town twang. She always started off with a cheery greeting before getting to whatever was on her mind. Bentley took off his jacket, and she walked into the hallway. Her smile collapsed when she saw him.

"What in tarnation have we here? You look like the devil himself. Straighten out your toupee. What's that green stuff on your suit? I just washed those pants yesterday. My, oh, my. I send you out to work for a day, and what happens?" She gently shoved him into the kitchen and sat him down in front of the cold grey slab of liver. It looked like a grossly mutant slug that had crawled onto his plate and died. She turned the tap of the kitchen sink on and

began piling the dishes.

"I talked to Rev. Miller at the store today, and do you know what he said to me?" Bentley piled the food into his mouth. AC/DC was calling him. "He told me that he thinks that maybe you ought to get more sleep on Saturday nights, so you won't sleep during the sermons. Well, I had to laugh when I told him that you're in bed every night at 10:00. I told him that maybe I'd bring one of my knitting needles with me to keep you awake. He didn't laugh, though. Such a solemn man. You'd think that he's got more to worry about than how many of his parishioners are sleeping." She sprinkled some detergent in the water and, after a minute, shut off the tap. Bentley gulped hard, and the last piece of liver slid down his throat. He got up, opened the fridge and spied a saucer of chocolate cake. He took it out. Mother watched every move out of the corner of her eye. "Mrs. McGillicuddy down at the bakery said I should get that just for you. She said she'd never seen anyone so skinny as you. She thinks that one of these days there's gonna be a strong north wind that's just gonna blow you away. I've gotta admit that you sure are skinny as a rail, but it ain't like I don't feed you. I work darn hard at Kresge's so that I can keep us in food. A woman's got to feed her son, even if it breaks her back. I sure ain't got it easy. Many's the time I've thought that I just want to kick the bucket. Kick it right out the door." She laughed, pleased with herself. Bentley chuckled, then wolfed down the last forkful of his cake. He knew it was time to break for the door.

"G'night, mother," he said, carefully wiping his mouth with his kerchief.

"G'night dear," she said. "Don't forget to brush your teeth and say your prayers." Bentley ran up the stairs, opened the door and slid into his room.

He didn't hit the light switch in his room, but felt his way through the dark and turned on the night-light by his bed. He was sure "The Dukes" was already over, and besides, he only wanted to tune around with his radio. He stepped into the closet, ducked underneath the hanger bar, closed the door and hit the lights. He saw that dust was collecting on the radio; he hadn't used it for a couple of days. He grabbed a rag from under the desk on which the radio sat, and began carefully wiping off the console. He pushed the "power" button, pulled out his chair and sat down. He put the phones on; there was an electric sound-cloud of static. He turned the dial nimbly and found a station. It was a talk show in some foreign language, which could have been Yugoslavian or Russian. He kept turning the dial until he found 98.7. The signal was clear, and the DJ was announcing the live broadcast of an AC/DC concert coming up in ten minutes. Bentley's heart flipped in his throat. It was just too good to be true. A smile opened up across his face, and he continued wiping off the console, dipping around the dials and knobs and switches. Bentley's father had told him to take good care of the radio, and Bentley dutifully did this. That had been fourteen years ago, and his father had been dead for ten. Bentley didn't let himself think of his father; instead, he listened to the smooth opening strain of Eddie Van Halen's guitar on "Running with the Devil." Bentley took out his air guitar and rocked with Eddie for a while.

He decided that he'd like to tape the concert. He reached underneath the desk and flipped open the tape case second from the top and pulled out a blank TDK. He pushed the "eject" button on the left cassette player and shoved the blank in. He pressed down the "pause" and "record" buttons and set the input levels between 5 and 6. He switched the "tape select" to normal, the "NR system" switch to "off", turned the Dolby dial all the way up and adjusted the equalizer, sliding the bars all the way to the right. Finally, he adjusted the bass and treble to a pleasant equilibrium. The digital clock on his right switched to 10:00. A new voice announced the beginning of the special broadcast. Bentley leaned back in his chair and shut the light off. He sat in the dark, the only illumination being the red glow from the clock. He slid the "volume" bar across to 8 and let the guitar sear holes in his brain; he laid back and smiled contentedly. The singer was screaming about "running up a road paved with flowers/ and corpses, baby. Mine and yours . . ." Thin, crisp, static cut in and out for a second. Bentley

thought perhaps the signal was weakened by a storm somewhere in the Midwest.

"Darn," he said and shut off the cassette player. There was no use trying to tape a fading signal. He might as well just listen. Suddenly, WKJV was gone all together. There was a nanosecond of dead air. He turned the light on and leaned forward. A deep, low vice came on clear and strong. He tried to adjust the dial, but AC/DC was nowhere to be found. "... Al B. Goode for Al B. Goode's New and Used Cars, and I've got *the* car for you. I mean, you've got to be sick of driving around in that beat up old wreck." Bentley listened with interest now. He thought it must be a ghost signal that he'd never caught before, but that was impossible. Especially one so clear. Where could it be from? "... "Do you have a dream of a new you? I've got the car that will make you into a new man and change your life." Bentley thought of the Dart and of the \$27,000 that he'd saved since high school. Maybe ... "I've got brand new Lamborghinis, Inceratos, Endorettis, Vantas, Deloreans and many more. A wide selection all for a simple price ... " and the signal faded. Bentley leaned forward to adjust the dial, but then the voice returned. "... Phisto Road, Palmer." Static cut in. He straightened up. That was impossible, he thought. He broke into an icy sweat. Palmer, Ontario was only an hour from Princeton. But Palmer didn't even have a radio station. The signal had been too clear, though. It had to be close to be that clear. It just didn't click. He thought then about a Lamborghini or a Delorean. What others had Al B. Goode named off? Cars he had never heard of; but then he didn't know much about cars. He stared at the console, thinking about his Dart; it was just so old. Mother liked it though. But he *wanted* a new car. What had the guy said about the price? Never mind. The more he thought about a new car the better it felt. AC/DC started to come back in again. It was decided. Al B. Goode had his car. Bentley was convinced. Al was right. He was going to go to Palmer tomorrow and get the car that was going to make him into a new man. He would trade in his Dart for a new sportscar that would change his life. Bentley's mind was charged with electricity, now. He sank back in his chair and let the music pour over him again, and it soothed him. The singer sang about being back in black, returning home and being glad to be back.

The next morning, Bentley awoke in his chair. Static filled his head; he took the headphones off and got up. He stretched, pushed the chair in and opened the door into his room. He walked to the window and looked across the neighbour's laneway into Carla's room. She stretched her arms out in her bed, threw the covers aside and got out of bed. She wore a thin, see-through teddy. Bentley watched her coldly. She mussed her hair in front of the mirror, turning her head this way and that, watching herself. She crossed the room to the door and walked out. He heard a big truck pull up out front and people talking. There was a loud metallic clunk, and he walked into the hall, down the stairs and out the front door. A tow truck was just hoisting the front end of the Dodge.

"Hey. Stop that! What's ... " He halted himself, blushing. He walked to where Mother was standing with the tow truck driver, who looked somewhat like his mother, except for his coveralls. Mother would never wear coveralls, especially greasy ones.

"Is this your box of bolts, son?" The driver-mechanic chomped on a cigar, speaking out of the right side of his mouth.

"I tried to teach him about keeping care of his stuff. I really tried. When I saw all that oil this morning, I knew that he'd finally done it." Mother looked icily at Bentley. He turned his eyes to the ground, shifted his feet, then looked at the mechanic.

"Well, what's wrong?"

"What's wrong? What's wrong?" The mechanic slobbered as he spoke. "What the hey's right's what I want to know. Your crank-case's drier than my great grandma's bones. The block's sure as hell cracked. It must've been red hot last night, because the whole engine's seized up. You've got enough oil on your driveway to buy a condo in Florida."

"So what will you give me for the car?"

The mechanic's jaw dropped, and the cigar fell out of his mouth into a pool of oil.

"What?" the mechanic and Mother chimed in unison. Mother stepped back and her eyes caught hold of Bentley. "you want to sell that beautiful car after all the good years it's given you?"

Yes, thought Bentley, I know what I want, Mother.

"Well . . ." he said.

The mechanic picked up his cigar, wiped off the oil on his coveralls and stuck it back in his mouth. He rolled it to the right side of his mouth and spoke out of the left.

"Son, I don't wanna get involved in no family squabbles. It's your car. If you want to sell the sucker, I'll give you thirty bucks for it. That's scrapyard price minus towing cost."

"OK. Thirty dollars," said Bentley.

His mother took a step back, opened her mouth but nothing came out. She pursed her lips together, and she watched Bentley with a mask of puzzlement. The man pulled out his billfold and handed three tens to Bentley, who took them and stuffed them into his pocket.

"Well, I guess that'll be all," the mechanic said, looking warily at Bentley's mother and then at Bentley. He rolled the cigar back over to the left side of his mouth, walked to his truck and opened the door. Mother held fire with her stare. She didn't flinch, but she let out a small sob. The man got into his truck, started the engine and drove off with the Dart tagging along like a puppy on a leash. It left a piddling trail of oil as it rolled down the street.

Mother had been caught wordless, but now she collected a barrage of questions to bombard Bentley with. He turned and began up the walk toward the house.

"Just a minute, young man." He was already in the house. He ran upstairs, grabbed his jacket out of his room and headed back down.

"Where in Sam Hill do you think you're going?" She stood blocking the bottom of the stairs, arms folded in front of her stout belly.

"I'm going to buy a car, mother." He looked past her, carefully avoided her locked gaze. "I . . . well, I heard an ad on the radio last night . . ."

"Are you gonna take care of a car? It serves you right, you know, your car getting baked like that. Many's the time I thought that something like this might happen.

"It was an old car."

"It was a good car."

"Mother . . ." But she wasn't listening. Bentley just wanted to leave, but she stood like a great wall. He sat down on the stairs.

"You want to go buy a car? What kind of car?" Her expression softened. "I don't care. Get a car. Don't listen to your mother. Go waste all the money that I've helped you save. Do what you damn well please." She walked into the kitchen, sobbing.

Bentley got up and descended the stairs to the door. He wanted to go to his mother and apologize, but then an image of himself behind the wheel of a Lamborghini flashed on the screen of his mind. He walked out the door, forgetting to say goodbye to his mother.

He walked the five blocks to the bus station, bought his ticket and waited in the terminal for about forty minutes. On the hour drive to Palmer, he slept and almost missed his stop, but the lady next to him woke him up. He got off the bus and looked around. The sun blazed high in the sky and dust blew through the streets. Palmer had a population of 11,000 people, about twice the size of Princeton, and he had no idea where he'd find Pisto Road. He went to the girl at the ticket window and asked her if she might know. She didn't know, but she was from Carleton, a town about twenty miles to the north. He went to a restaurant next door and asked the waitress if she knew of Pisto Road. She'd lived in Palmer for fifteen years and she'd never heard of it, she said, and she asked him if he'd gotten off at the right stop. Bentley suddenly doubted it all. What a stupid foolish worm I am, he told himself. He walked out of the

restaurant. It was so simple: the signal was from Palmer, Idaho or something like that. It had taken a freak skip off of a satellite and that's why it was so clear. What an idiot he'd been. He'd better head home and apologize to Mother for everything. He'd been such a worm.

Someone tapped him on the shoulder. He looked down and there was a tiny old man, about five feet high, looking up at him. He had a grizzled face and grey slimy hair.

"Did you say you're looking for Phisto Road? I was just sitting in the restaurant there, and I heard you asking about Phisto Road."

Bentley hadn't seen anyone in the restaurant, but perhaps the old man had been sitting quietly in the corner.

"It's a hard road to find. Not many people go up that way," said the old man.

"There's some car dealership there . . . isn't there?"

"Al B. Goode's. Yes. I know the place." His frosty blue eyes quinted as he spoke. He touched his fingertips to his mouth, then stretched his hand out to his right. "It's really not too far from here. Walking distance if that's how you're getting around," he said. "You just follow this road up about half a mile, then turn left. That's Phisto Road. Al B. Goode's is the only place on the road. It's a short one. Nobody goes up there too much. Nobody't all." He squinted at Bentley. "Well, do you have any other questions, lad?"

"No." Bentley shuffled his feet in the dirt.

"Well, happy dealing then." He turned and strolled into the restaurant. The door chimed as he walked in. Strange. He hadn't heard the door chime when the old man had walked up behind him.

Bentley walked up the road that the man had pointed out, and about five minutes later he saw the string of tiny flags that marked Al B. Goode's New and Used Cars. The outside of the building was dust covered and some of the used cars were junk heaps that looked even worse than his now deceased Dodge. Where were the Deloreans and Vantarass, he wondered. Doubt slipped through the back door of his consciousness again. Something wasn't right. But this must be the place. He walked into the yard, and a salesman wearing a derby hat and a trenchcoat came out the front door. Flies buzzed in the air for a few rounds then, after the screen slammed shut, settled again. The man tromped up to Bentley, stirring tiny whirlwinds as he walked. He held out his hand.

"Howdy and good day to you. My name's Al B. Goode, and the B stand for best deals in town. Betcha can't buy a better automobile" he stressed the last syllable to maintain the alliteration, "anywhere 'bouts here. By golly we beat 'em all to the last bitchin' buck." He smiled widely as he shook Bentley's hand.

"Boy. I swear you're bigger than a damn norseman. Anyone ever tell you that you ought to be in pictures? I swear, boy. You should be a movie star."

Bentley clucked softly and shuffled his feet in the dirt, standing with his hands in his pockets.

"What a smile you've got there. Show them pearly whites." Al looked into Bentley's eyes. Bentley looked up at him. "Just what kind of car are you looking for?" For the first time Bentley noticed his eyes. They were narrow slits of cold grey steel. Bentley didn't look at him for very long.

"Well . . . I heard your ad on the radio . . ."

"You heard my ad on the radio." He smiled, looking up at the sky. "Well Lord be praised." Bentley thought he sounded like one of the deep south radio preachers that he heard late Sunday nights as he turned the dial on his radio. "Son, they told me that radio ads would bring in the business, but I didn't buy it. By the baptizing Jesus, I would swear the word of mouth was the only way to build business. But boy, you've made a believer out of Al B. Goode, by golly. And just for that, I'm gonna show you something that I've got just for you. all those beauties that you heard about on the radio are hidden away right back here. He

flashed a smile at Bentley and turned. Bentley thought he saw something move under the trenchcoat, like a hidden snake back there. He doubted his eyesight in the bright sun, though. What would he have under his coat that would move like that? But it *was* an awfully hot day for a trenchcoat. Bentley was sweating in his T-shirt. Bentley wondered about his name, too. Wasn't that a Chuck Berry song? Bentley wasn't sure.

Al motioned for him to follow as he walked toward the back. He wiped his brow without removing his hat, then held out his hand, looking up at Bentley.

"Back behind, Bentley my boy, the black Baronetti beckons with baited breath." Bentley turned the corner of the building. The sun slid along the sleek lines of the hood, which tapered into a sharp point. The Baronetti's windshield was tinted deep black, impervious to any eye. the T-roof was shaped like an arrow, and it sloped down off the back. There were red and white side stripes that curved around the fenders, and the mags were black with white centers. It was clean, though, most of all. The dust drifted right over it, and the car maintained its black sheen. Al walked around the front of the car and stood with his arms wide open.

"Beautiful?"

"Beautiful." Bentley hissed, dumbstruck.

"Well, get in, and give her a test." Bentley walked around to his side and stood looking at it.

"Get in. It's OK. It ain't gonna eat you, boy." He laughed. He pushed the button on the door. It didn't swing open, or even upward, but it slid like a panel or a gate. Bentley climbed into the driver's seat, and it was as if it was molded just for him. It seemed to grip his form and hold him. Al reached in, pressing a blue button to the left of the steering column. The passenger window rolled down. He pressed the button on the outside again, and the door slid closed with its window open. Bentley looked around. There were only two seats, but it was amazingly roomy. There was a hatch, which he opened and under which he found a cache of alcohol. Al stood outside with his arms crossed, and he beamed at Bentley.

"Go ahead. It's yours for the taking." Bentley reached back and grabbed a bottle of vodka and opened it. Something was stirring deep inside him. He felt strong. He swigged the bottle, and it fired his throat as he swallowed. He handed the bottle to Al, who tilted it back, taking two long swallows before passing it back to Bentley. Bentley, who hadn't had a sip of booze since his high school formal when he had fallen asleep after three glasses of wine, sucked on the bottle; he nursed on it. It was warm on his throat, and it filled him with a sense of power that he'd never felt before. Power, he thought, that could change the world. The feeling warmed his thoughts, and he tried to cull some ideas. His brain seemed to be floating through another world, now. He looked at the dashboard panel, which glittered like a starry sky of tiny lights, gauges and dials that reminded him of his radio. If he could learn to control this car the way he could control his radio . . .

"You know the price of all this, don't you?" Al had been standing quietly observing Bentley, searching him, reading his thoughts. Bentley squinted and hesitated. Yes, he knew, and his mother's voice called from somewhere deep inside but very far away. Far away and drifting further.

"Yes, I do."

Al shifted on his feet, drew a finger across his brow and flicked the sweat away. He straightened his hat, leaned on the door and locked eyes with Bentley. "Bentley," he said softly, putting an icy hand on Bentley's shoulder, "I see a young man of tremendous potential." His eyes flashed a reddish glow for a second, and Bentley's heart did leapfrogs with his stomach. There was a ripping sound from somewhere, and an image flashed in Bentley's mind from out of nowhere: Mario slumped in a garbage heap covered in blood and dirt. Tire marks ran across his abdomen. The image disappeared, but Bentley was frozen, petrified, wondering where the image had come from. He didn't know, and then he didn't care. He just felt powerful.

"You're on your own, Bentley. It's been nice dealing with you." Al turned and walked back to the building.

Bentley sat and thought, and then he thought that he had never thought before. He took another slug of the bottle and set it on the seat beside him. He looked in the mirror. He had changed. Almost unnoticeably, yet a total change. Cheek bones that had given him a gaunt, empty look before, now framed and defined his face. His eyes which had been a cold blue were clear and sparkling now. He smiled, and there was a trace of dimples. He looked down at himself. His T-shirt had torn from bulging muscles. He had full power, now. He was going to go back to Princeton and change a few things. First, he thought he might visit Carla. Emotions flooded through him and his eyes watered from the intensity. and mother, he thought, mother I know of a bucket that I'd like to help you kick. His eyes drew into slitted crescents, as he concentrated deeply. He turned the key and gunned the engine of the Baronetti. A smooth even purr emanated from under the hood. He turned the stereo on and found WKJV then shoved the gearshift into "drive". As he pulled out of the car lot, dust swirled around behind the car, billowed up and hung in the air like a great spirit blessing his departure. Bentley smiled, pulling on a pair of sunglasses that he found on the dash. He was going home.

Jim Huinink

-The Ocean of Tears and Emptiness-

Waves on the horizon
Lost in the sand
Lovers in the surf
an empty seething hand

How to understand
this meaningless
change that deceives yet
stays the same until the
final storm usurps us,
spitting our battered broken bones
wasted on the shore
leaving a mortal effigy unnoticed
nay for a twist of wind
howling
at our memory

-A.A. Blackwell-

voice of doom

would you give me a world
of gray
silent trees, frozen deaths
skyscraping concrete tombs
monument to pride and fall
a snapshot world
no movement
no life
but for fighter rats
and mutant gangs
walking disease
gurgling death
no rules
no human joy

you speak so proud
so loud
this is the picture
this is our future
the life is worse
than instant death
you say you are the voice
you say you speak for me
I read your words
YOU LIE

I, too, am young
and see the future
of grays and greens
rainwashed, people-used
early morning quiet
empty streets
but for jogger and dog
busy parks, punk styles
and disapproving ladies
the lights and noisty dark
watched by quiet stars
this world is too full of life
to die
say the coffee cups
hairsprays
and diapers

says the rainbow

Deanna van Dijk

Rune

(Minor es, quam ut serenitas meam abducas)

She shines on my desktop,
illuminates my verse,
she watches and holds me
at night I am hers.
Lady Luna,
patron saint of lovers,
lamp on my desktop,
timepiece of my nightwatch,
collector of my teardrops.

For some
she is a worthy mistress,
the cinders of a
frail beauty
scarred by celestial kisses.
She is a soothing whisper
beyond me, leading me,
pouring down her love for me ...

She cheats!
She shines promises she fails to keep
calming me to peaceful sleep
leaving me in languor
in her pallid keep.
What?
Wait. The Lady Luna claims I lie,
aims an accusing aura
from her bedroom in the night sky.

Serenitas.

Luna, love,
I know that only silence sings
in the mountains of Altai.
I know that
you have spent eons
as an icon
for the likes of me.

Mare of the night sky,
altar of the poets
of past times,
light of the lovers
of these times,
in only a moment
I must climb
to you
to sleep
forever.

For now, Luna,
Tranquillas.
I ask you for a love
that is not yours.

Ashes of Amaranth

Love-lies-bleeding.
Life and vitality slowly ebb
from that which bleeds,
and it dies,
and it turns to ashes.

Amaranth,
your imaginary unfailing colour:
sometimes authentic
always illusory
momentarily inaccessible
forever incomprehensible

passion to ashes
lust to dust

*La cendre--laissez-la tranquille
pour mourir seulement seul*

Richard Horlings

-the appeal-

Please don't rub
my bleeding cut,
nor kick my
cooling corpse.

-A.A. Blackwell-

-and so it goes-

I spoke
She touched me
I ran from her
We tried to talk about the song
but I was naked to her love and
wanted to fly through the sun and
purge the lust that
made my heart so black
and her. . .
so very pure.

A.A. Blackwell-

Tess

Now, finally, Midsummer's
Day, you are tired; and
in that latent darkness,
I think you are lying
on a stone alter,
waiting for the Sun
to rise. Now, in that
still sunless grey dawn
there are hard men with
hard eyes and hard guns;
and now too early is
too late.

Tess, you died
already in his dream:
when humbled, despised,
you placed your life
in his unholding arms,
entrusted your life
to his unseeing eyes.
Less than untainted
more than unchaste
less than unblemished
more then impure--
such a heathen sacrifice
of Man: to men, by men,
for men.

Tess, you were
denied the right to refuse
to be sacrificed like the
pheasants shot for sport.
You had no shattered
wings, no bleeding, open
wounds. You had only
the hurt, and yes, Tess,
you were broken, and broken
still. And the sky wept
for you; you had no tears
of your own.

Tess, watch
with woman-child's eyes
a world without love
fall to the will of Fate.
When the only heart
is of blood spilt by your
hands, from whence shall
come passion, compassion?
Not from man, not even
from Angels ...

oh Tess,
you didn't have to wait
until Midsummer's Day
before the Son would rise
for you.

Why can I not cry
for the dying nor the dead
who live
in
the poor and the hungry
wandering aimlessly
through
hot, dry, deserts
freezing prison cells
dark city streets?
broken spirits crying out to me
my deafness
my death.
so here I sit
as callous
as ever

-A.A. Blackwell

Fall?

If it doesn't rain
soon our flowers
will quietly fade
in the sparkle shadow
of the crispy oak.

Sparks in the sky must ignite,
and outshine the burning sunlight
to redecorate on earth
summer's interior design.

But only echoes of thunder
whisper in cracks
between parched blades of grass
shivering in pools of twisted heat
or worn out shade--
where the slippery snake survives.

Audrey Benjamins

Le Beau Sans Merci

I

In space there is time
No awakening, no puddle-rising heat.
No heavy-swaying grain heads.
In space there is silence
No darting dashing notes.
No pouring, flowing melodies.
Dead Movement.

II

Peter, I had an exciting time tonight.
I know all your moves, already.
I know you inside out, already.
Peter, tell me you're excited.
Tell me you want me.
Tell me you're
The Hollowmen.
The Stuffed men.
Wanna come inside? Wanna come?

III

Dear Darlene: Remember us? Years ago.
We'd dance and talk.
We'd laugh and hike.
Dear Darlene: Remember us? Years ago.
Round and round and round and
Round kissing with wide wild lips...
Sorry I stopped it. I don't know why.
Peter.

IV

Stopping all the motions. Still.
I recall when I could move and be moved
I recall when I was more than empty, still I
Stop all the motions. Still.
My error. My evil. My call:
"Le Beau sans merci hath me in thrall!"
Inside me only time and silence.
Dead Movement.

How long shall we stay?

How long shall we stay
nowhere? While winter's
kiss descends upon us,
the threat of cold stillness
is the approach of
the mythos of winter,
in this first snowfall.

I don't want you
to wait for me
when I may not arrive
in time for myself:
to move is to move together,
to stay is to remain apart.
How long shall we stay nowhere?
To move in this cold
stillness, Darling,
would be to
touch our tongues
to frozen irony.

Richard Horlings

The Desert Reign

I am walking, Oh Lord, in a barren land;
A constant battle to keep the lifeless land without,
from wounding me within.
But the heat makes me weary oh God
and I have grown weak
and vulnerable.
I feel alone and helpless without my shield.
My soul has dried up.
For I have become a desert inside,
yielding to the power of the blazing sun--earthly sin.
And as I gaze into its hypnotic false light,
I become suddenly awakened,
for I sense a different heat,
the heat from a brighter Son.
I turn and commit my soul to its live giving, guiding Light
And I feel a drop of water.
The longer I look and follow my new Light,
The harder it rains.
The wasteland within my soul gives way
to a garden of Eden, and the Light settles on the Tree of Life.
I was a desert, but never deserted.
And I know that in the centre of the barren wasteland I often live,
there always lies a certain power
so condense I frequently fail to see it,
yet so powerful, when I let it reign,
it gives life to all around me, and to me life eternal.
A desert, yet never deserted.

JAN 14 '93